12: Faron E-4, 5 (1952-1954) 1964
SG4 Araucanians SG4
Mapuche

a person dies people assume that they themselves are in grave supernatural danger, autopsy or not.

A simple method of divining the cause of death, and therefore the extent to which the survivors themselves are threatened, is to place a bowl of flour near the head of the corpse. If some of the flour is gone after the night passes, the person's spirit has eaten it, which indicates that the spirit is hungry and well and not in the hands of *kalku*. It is again a consoling notion, and much less expensive than the services of a specialist.

Machi claim that they are difficult to persuade to perform counter magic against a *kalku*. While such enterprise is entirely legitimate, it places the *machi* in the same general camp with the *kalku* and, if the people are at all suspicious of her, could ruin her reputation. People tend to confirm this claim, saying that *machi* no longer perform magic directly against sorcerers, at least not against professional sorcerers. *Machi*, therefore, content themselves and their clients with preventing death and curing illness by chasing away evil spirits, rather than by killing witches (i.e. causing their bodies to die) and releasing the captured spirits. At the death of a patient, then, a *machi* usually has no further service to offer.

Machi always operate in an atmosphere charged with danger, but they see a great difference between chasing away evil spirits sent by a *kalku* and killing the *kalku* herself. Although *machi* do not like to deal directly with *kalku*, they are not reluctant to discover them, which is much less dangerous. This is generally done in a ceremony called *kalkutun*.[1] The ceremony lasts a long

[1] I have never witnessed this ceremony, but I managed to persuade a *machi* friend to enact a modified version of it. The ceremony followed the basic pattern suggested in the vignettes above. In the darkened room, the (denied) ventriloquism was very effective. From time to time, the *machi* threw straw on the fire and, as corners of the room became lighted momentarily, threw her voice in that direction. My wife's supposed inability to produce offspring was the occasion for this ceremony. The diagnosis was *kaftun*—emasculation of the husband by a woman who had borne him a child out of wedlock. The *machi* felt I knew who practiced *kaftun* against me. We were told to sip from two bottles of medicine every morning and evening for the next month. After the stated period passed, *my* wife became pregnant. It should not be difficult to imagine the impact on the local people of this "international" power of the *machi*.